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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the status of the endangered Kwak'wala language on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and efforts to revive it. Kwak'wala, also known as Kwakiutl, belongs to the Kwakiutlian group of the Wakashan language family. Following a description of Kwak'wala's historic decline and current status (mostly elderly speakers comprising about 4 percent of the population), the paper discusses characteristics of successful language revitalization efforts. Examples from indigenous populations around the world illustrate the importance of these five characteristics: a sense of group solidarity, emphasis on literacy, environments that allow immersion in the target language, use of the language in the media, and a large or isolated population of speakers and potential speakers. Drawing on the characteristics and activities of successful programs, suggestions are outlined for the design of a Kwak'wala revitalization program. Efforts to implement these suggestions had varying degrees of success. Most community members expressed a desire to revive Kwak'wala but were not willing to do much themselves, preferring instead to shift responsibility to the schools. After some initial enthusiasm, community interest faded and classes dwindled to a few individuals, although some were very motivated. The most successful community activity was a short-term culture and language immersion camp. It appears that unless the community is willing to radically change the way it approaches Kwak'wala, the language will die completely in a few decades. Contains 25 references. (SV)

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Reversing Language Shift: Can Kwak'wala Be Revived

Stan J. Anonby

This paper describes the status of the endangered Kwak'wala language on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. Then different methods and procedures used in various language revitalization efforts throughout the world are reviewed and essential elements for successful language efforts are extracted to develop a proposal for the revival of Kwak'wala for the community and schools. It concludes with a discussion of the results when portions of this proposal were actually implemented at Alert Bay.

Jon Allan
Reyhner

This paper is dedicated to God, the Creator of the Kwak'wala language, and to all the speakers of Kwak'wala.

Among the indigenous people of British Columbia are the Kwakwaka'wakw, a group of tribes that speak one of the five dialects of Kwak'wala, a member of the Wakashan language family. At present the Kwakwaka'wakw are divided into 15 different tribes or family groups. Each tribe has ties to one home village, although several tribes may live in one village and some villages are abandoned. They are the original inhabitants of the northern part of Vancouver Island and now live in two major areas: the northern tip of Vancouver Island, centered in Alert Bay, and north-central Vancouver Island, centered in Campbell River. About 112 miles of virtually uninhabited country lie between the two areas. The term "Kwakwaka'wakw" was only recently coined, because there is no historic name or even a strong sense of Kwakwaka'wakw identity, though the people are joined by language, culture, and economy.

At the time of European contact in 1786, the Kwakwaka'wakw formed between 23 and 27 tribes or family groups, each allied to one chief. There was always intermarriage between groups and considerable movement for economic reasons. For example, if the chief of one group acquired a reputation for giving lavish potlatches, his group would likely increase. Each group had its own places to dig clams, fish, and so forth. Originally they were restricted nomads, moving from winter clamming beds, to spring eulichan (smelt) runs up the rivers, to summer fishing grounds. Sometimes two or more tribes shared the same village site, and group boundaries were constantly shifting owing to splits, mergers, and wars.

The coming of Europeans sped up the pace of change. Conflicts became bloodier with the introduction of guns, and new diseases decimated the population. The estimated pre-contact Kwakwaka'wakw population of 19,125 fell to just 1,039 in 1924 (Galois, 1994). Change accelerated in 1849 when the Hudson Bay Company built Fort Rupert. All the tribes came there to trade, and conflicts increased with more contact. Finally, the Mamalilikulla tribe came up with the

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idea that instead of fighting with weapons they would fight with potlatches. That is, they would out-give each other in potlatch feasts.

In the late 1800s, the Canadian government began the process of making treaties with the indigenous people. Their first dealings were with Plains Indians, who were divided into bands. Treaties were not signed with the British Columbian Indians, but they were allotted reserves. Since the government was accustomed to dealing with bands of Indians on the prairies, they insisted on using the same term to deal with the indigenous peoples on the Pacific Coast. The term "band" did not fit well with the Kwakwaka'wakw, who were used to much more fluid units of self-identity. A band is governed by an elected chief and council, and government funding flows through the band. The band system of government and the term "band" are resented by some people who would prefer to return to the potlatch system of government with hereditary chiefs.

The language

The lack of strong Kwakwaka'wakw identity has hindered efforts to revive their language. There is little interest in learning a dialect different from one's own, and there are five dialects. As Wardhaugh summarizes,

> A group that feels intense solidarity may be willing to overcome great linguistic differences in establishing a norm, whereas one that does not have this feeling may be unable to overcome relatively small differences and be unable to agree on a single variety and norm. (1992, p. 31)

The latter is the case with the Kwakwaka'wakw. Fort Rupert was built on the Kwakiutl land, and the famous anthropologist Franz Boas further increased the prestige of the Kwakiutl through his lifelong study of them at the end of the nineteenth century, resulting in two shelves of ethnographic and linguistic materials. For these reasons, the terms Kwagiulth or Kwakiutl and the concomitant Kwak'wala became the general term for all 12 surviving groups. Initially, most people did not seem to mind identifying with the Kwakiutl tribe because of their high prestige, but now there is a movement away from this identification.

In 1977, the Summer Institute of Linguistics found 1,000 Kwak'wala speakers. By 1981, the census counted 975 Wakashan speakers, of whom Kwak'wala speakers are only a part (Grimes, 1988). In 1991, Statistics Canada counted 485 Wakashan speakers. Today there are likely around 200 Kwak'wala speakers, which account for less than 4% of the total Kwakwaka'wakw population. The handful of monolingual Kwak'wala speakers are all over ninety. There is also a one-sided pattern of borrowing: Kwak'wala forms are rarely used when a person speaks English, but English words are used freely when speaking Kwak'wala. The handful of bilingual parents have monolingual English speaking children. The occasions when Kwak'wala is still used include public speaking and singing at potlatches, funerals, and church services. Today, the majority of Kwakwaka'wakw live in the cities of Victoria, Vancouver, Nanaimo, and Campell

River where there is little opportunity to speak Kwak'wala. In order to "get ahead" everywhere—particularly in the cities—Kwak'wala is perceived as less useful than English.

The most commonly expressed reason for the decline of Kwak'wala by the Kwakwaka'wakw is that they were forbidden to speak it at St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay, which operated from the 1920s to the 1970s. Most Kwakwaka'wakw children, as well as children from non-Kwak'wala speaking villages to the north, attended and boarded at St. Michael's. Further study shows other reasons for the decline. Kwak'wala usage declined in lockstep with the Kwakwaka'wakw culture. Kwak'wala speakers are being attacked on many fronts. The Kwakwaka'wakw have been colonized and marginalized, and their language suffered in prestige by its association with their disadvantaged culture. English is perceived as the best avenue of social mobility and the only road to the modern world. The Kwakwaka'wakw who most resembled white people were rewarded economically. The Kwakwaka'wakw were faced by a cruel dilemma described by Fishman (1991): either to remain loyal to their traditions and language and to remain socially disadvantaged (consigning their own children to such disadvantage as well) or to abandon their distinctive practices, traditions, and language, and thereby to improve their own and their children's lots in life via cultural and linguistic suicide. The geographical separation that protected Kwak'wala in the past is proving no match for radio and television now bringing English into every Kwakwaka'wakw living room. However, the shift to English has not brought with it the promised material benefits. As Fishman (1991) notes, shifting away from one's native tongue brings its own problems and exacts a steep price. Assimilating populations have serious medical, psychological, and social problems such as crime and violence. A comparison of the villages of Alert Bay and Sointula (on neighboring Malcolm Island) highlights the problems faced by Kwakwaka'wakw communities. Although both have roughly the same population, Alert Bay has a hospital and two doctors. Sointula has a doctor, but he has to go off island to find work. Sointula has one policeman; Alert Bay has four.

Recently there has been a revived pride and interest in the language, and there is the frequently expressed perception that Kwak'wala can be revived in schools. However, the reality in the Kwakwaka'wakw communities seems to be the reverse. That is, the better educated a person is, the less likely he or she speaks Kwak'wala. It is spoken most fluently and most frequently by the problem drinkers and people who have done very poorly in school. The youngest speakers are often plagued with alcoholism and social problems, and some are known to speak Kwak'wala only when intoxicated. It is difficult to say exactly why this is the case. Maybe these Kwak'wala speakers are less able to handle the rapid erosion of their culture and language and take to drinking as a coping mechanism.

The Kwakwaka'wakw generally perceive they would be better off if they were able to hold on to Kwak'wala. Dawson (1992) echoes a sentiment frequently expressed: "We can have our dancing and singing for awhile but with

out our language our culture is DEAD." Kwak'wala is regarded as a symbol of the Kwakwaka'wakw and an integral part of the culture, and not merely as a tool that can be replaced by English. However, the current school-based Kwak'wala programs are not succeeding in getting the children to speak Kwak'wala with each other.

Spoken languages, like living things, are constantly changing, and most of the time speakers are not aware of these changes because they occur gradually. When change occurs so rapidly that the speakers notice it, it often causes concern, especially if they see their language is becoming extinct. Rapid change often occurs when there is extensive bilingualism, which can lead to one language being lost altogether. Although there are many bilingual speech communities in the world, "maintained group bilingualism is unusual" (Paulston, 1992, p. 70). Particularly unstable is the situation where the community is bilingual in a minority language as well as a language of wider communication, as is the case with Kwak'wala.

Some people seem ready to give up their language freely, usually for economic reasons. Bentahila and Davies (1992) describe how Berber parents actively encouraged children to use Arabic in preference to Berber, with remarks such as "Berber won't help you to earn your daily bread" and Arabic "gives an opening to the outside world" and "allows communication with everyone" (pp. 199 & 201). Bentahila and Davies note that some Berbers "appear to look upon languages as being rather like clothes, things for which one may feel a certain affection, but which are to be maintained only as long as they are of use" (p. 204) (for another view on Berber see Almasude, this volume). The Jews in Morocco appear to have similar attitudes, as supported by comments such as "whether I speak Arabic, French, or English does not affect my identity, which is Moroccan and Jewish" (p. 208). Pandharipande (1992) reports speech communities in India who are not concerned about losing their language, because they feel they can preserve their cultural identity through their traditional rituals, dress patterns, food habits, and their "unique values."

Language loss frequently occurs when society is in transition. It is often said that when a language dies, a world dies. But the converse is surely equally true that when a world dies, its language dies with it. The repression and/or loss of an ancestral language can be quite painful, because of strong emotional ties to the language. Wardhaugh notes that, "a demand for 'language rights' is often one of the first demands made by a discontented minority almost anywhere in the world" (1986, p. 346). The main goal of minority movements is usually the improvement or their lot or their children's lot in life. If language revival is perceived to run contrary to this goal, it will not succeed.

Five characteristics of successful language revitalization efforts

A review of research on language revitalization indicates that successful efforts share five important characteristics: a sense of group solidarity, immersion language teaching environments, literacy, the use of mass media, and the development of a sufficiently large group of speakers. Each characteristic is

discussed below, and specific suggestions are made on how the Kwakwaka'wakw could strengthen their language based on what can be learned from successful language revitalization efforts.

Solidarity: A language effort will usually fail if the focus is on language alone. It is much more likely to succeed if it is part of a greater societal movement. That is, if language promotion is part of a nationalist movement or is perceived as an expression of solidarity or ethnicity, it has greater potential for success. Discrimination and racism, which Jews, Maoris, and other minority groups often face, develop a strong sense of "us" versus "them" and aids language retention. Some language projects that are succeeding because people feel a strong sense of solidarity include French in Quebec, Catalán in Spain, Hebrew in Israel, Irish in Ireland, Frisian in The Netherlands, and Maori in New Zealand.

An American example of solidarity is with Me'phaa or Tlapanec, a group of dialects spoken by 75,000 people in southern Mexico. In the 1970s there was a barely passable road into Me'phaa territory, which brought in Spanish-speaking Mexicans and their attitudes. Mark Weathers writes, "It seems to me that in 1972 at least an influential segment of the Iliatenco [a Me'phaa village] society felt it was necessary to turn their backs on their identity as speakers of an unwritten 'dialecto,' which is the source of the severest discrimination in Mexico" (Mark Weathers, personal communication, July 1996). When indigenous people in Mexico come into contact with Spanish-speaking Mexicans, they tend to be ridiculed or despised for speaking their indigenous language. The shift away from Me'phaa was evident in children, who spoke Spanish as they were playing on the streets, and in adults, who refused to talk Me'phaa with strangers. In 1992, Weathers revisited Ilianteco and was amazed to find that although people could speak Spanish better than before, they had switched back to speaking Me'phaa. Influential Me'phaa leaders spearheaded a back-to-Me'phaa movement. Weathers speculates that after they achieved some status in, and some of the benefits of, the Spanish-speaking society, they realized they wanted to keep their Me'phaa identity and language. Their most effective action was to get rid of the Spanish-speaking teachers and replace them with Me'phaa ones. In defiance of the norm, the Me'phaa were able to actually use aspects of the Spanish-speaking society—books, radio, schools—to promote their language. The Me'phaa insist they are able to understand all the different Me'phaa dialects—something other Mexican indigenous groups with different dialects do not claim. This assertion of unity is one indication of the strong sense of Me'phaa solidarity (Charles Speck, personal communication, July 1997).

In order for Kwak'wala revival to take place, Kwakwaka'wakw solidarity is essential. Together, a whole generation must be willing to leave behind an existing way of life to create a new one, of which Kwak'wala is a part. One way this has been done is to actually move to a new location and start a new community where everyone speaks only Kwak'wala. Among Australian Aborigines there has been a movement where people leave the settlements set up by the government and form their own traditional "outstation" communities in the outback.

The new communities provide an atmosphere where people can eat Aboriginal food, practice Aboriginal customs, play Aboriginal music, and so forth (Fishman, 1991). Kwak'wala speakers could very quickly become the majority in a new community like this, but there would have to be compelling reasons beyond language, possibly economic and/or religious, to establish a community that spoke only Kwak'wala.

Isolation from other groups for religious reasons can also lead to language maintenance. The Old Order Amish have been able to preserve their variety of German right outside Philadelphia, and Hasidic Jews have been able to preserve Yiddish in New York City because they have protected their cultural boundaries through their religion. One radical way to put boundaries in place is to establish whole new communities made up of back-to-native-language advocates. Shortly after the turn of the century, Jews established Hebrew-speaking communities in what is now Israel. Although some of these communities failed, the ones that succeeded were able to help increase the number of native Hebrew speakers from zero to four million.

Literacy: All the successful efforts at language revitalization I reviewed placed a high premium on literacy. Fishman writes, "Unless they are entirely withdrawn from the modern world, minority ethnolinguistic groups need to be literate in their mother tongue (as well as in some language of wider communication)" (1980, p. 169). Most language efforts almost instinctively emphasize literacy. In India, the government gives prizes for writers who prepared Hindi materials for the newly literate. Nearly everyone in the province of Catalonia is being taught to read Catalán in Spain. The Me'phaa in Mexico are targeting literacy with the "Me'phaa 2000" program that aims to have 2,000 works in Me'phaa by the year 2000.

The German colonial government of Tangayika in Africa before World War II saw literacy as a way to spread Swahili. "Swahili newspapers were founded, and village headmen made reports in Swahili" (Paulston, 1992, p. 61). When the British took over after World War I, they continued this policy. As of the 1970s, literature in Swahili consisted mainly of periodicals and school materials. In order to demonstrate that the language is fully capable of being used for literary work, President Nyerere himself translated Shakespeare's Julius Caesar into Swahili. W. O'Barr notes an economist named Peter Temu followed this lead with the publication of a textbook in Swahili in his field. In recent years, popular novels such as detective stories and romances have been published (Fasold, 1984).

Literacy was also a key to Hebrew revival. Hebrew never died completely. It continued to remain widely known and used as a liturgical language primarily associated with religious ritual and the Bible. In the eighteenth century, it began to be used as a medium for modern *belles lettres*. Rabin notes that until the nineteenth century, many men could read and write Hebrew, so it was not be that difficult for them to begin speaking it (Cooper, 1989).

The number of Basque newspapers in Europe is also growing, indicating an increase in literacy. This is significant, because traditionally Basque is only an oral language. There are volunteers who have translated hundreds of specialized

volumes into Basque. These efforts have resulted in a Basque university, which now teaches a third of its curriculum in Basque. "For the first time in history, there are young Basque intellectuals who are embarking on academic careers in Basque rather than only in Spanish or French" (Fishman, 1991, p. 178).

A literacy project can also give a language permanence. Cherokee and Mohawk are two American Indian languages that have a long history or contact with Europeans and also a long literary tradition (Crawford, 1990). That these languages survive when other Amerindian languages surrounding them have not is a testimony to the staying power that literacy gives a language. In general, languages with literary traditions survive longer than languages with only oral traditions.

It is common for a dying minority language to borrow vocabulary and phonology from the dominant language. Unchecked, borrowing will eventually kill the minority language. Huave in Mexico and Dogrib in Canada are two language efforts that have used literacy to stop the inflow of Spanish and English loanwords, respectively. It may be an overstatement to say that the Huave project reversed a full-blown language shift, but it did guide the language back into the mainstream of Huave society. In 1982, Huave was spoken by 12,000 people in and around San Mateo del Mar (Grimes, 1988). The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) conducts a project there consisting primarily of the publication of a New Testament and a dictionary. Huave literacy and the Huave dictionary have been instrumental in stemming the flow of Spanish loanwords into Huave. Because of the dictionary, the Huave people have been reviving and revising the way they speak. Huave also shifted into the domain of literature (Steve Marlett, personal communication, July 1996).

A 1987 SIL survey found Dogrib spoken by 2,400 indigenous people in northern Canada (Grimes, 1988). Although most Dogribs speak their language, there is almost universal bilingualism that has resulted in a lot of borrowing from English. The Dogrib language project consists of Leslie Saxon, a linguist, working together with a team from SIL. They have produced a grammar of Dogrib, some primers to help the people read their language, and a dictionary. These efforts had a healthy effect on the people's attitude toward their language. Seeing that it could be written down and had grammar, just like English, brought a sense of pride to the people (Leslie Saxon, personal communication, November 1993). The dictionaries were very popular as the people became interested in using the Dogrib words, rather than English loanwords. Although Dogrib was not in immediate danger of extinction, poor attitudes toward the language, widespread bilingualism, and incursion of English words were indicators that the language was threatened.

Literacy has also been part the Kaurna revival efforts in the plains of Adelaide, Australia. Kaurna is an aboriginal language that ceased being spoken on a daily basis in the 1860s. The last speaker died in 1929. Although it is almost unheard of for a language that has gone out of all use to be revived, Kaurna appears to be such a case. Since 1990 people have been attempting to reclaim, reassemble, and become literate in Kaurna. Since no sound recording are available, the only

basis for the project are documents recorded in the nineteenth century by German missionaries and other observers. They started with writing songs, and producing a songbook and cassette. Then Kaurna was introduced into the school programs. Momentum slowly grew, and now it is relatively common to use Kaurna to deliver speeches at openings of conferences and other events. Rob Amery from the University of Adelaide has witnessed well over 100 such speeches (1997). There are also signs that Kaurna is beginning to spread beyond the domains of education and speechmaking.

Although the emphasis for the Kwakwaka'wakw must be primarily on spoken Kwak'wala, it is also desirable for all Kwakwaka'wakw to be able to read and write the language as well. In particular, it is important that adult Kwak'wala literacy go hand in hand with school programs providing Kwak'wala literacy for children. In this way, the generations can be united through Kwak'wala literacy, rather than separated. Adult and child literacy can be a good way to strengthen the crucial intergenerational link. In order for adult literacy to take place, there need to be easy-reading literacy materials and a dictionary, and presently there is a lack of adult Kwak'wala literacy materials.

Immersion: Another common element of successful language efforts is that they do not teach the language in question through another language. Well thought out language efforts are careful to maintain environments where people can be immersed in the target language. Some languages that illustrate this are French, Catalán, Hebrew, Basque, Navajo, Maori, and Arapaho. Most frequently, the term "immersion" is used with reference to schools. For example, at the K-12 bilingual Rock Point Community School in Arizona some teachers teach only in Navajo. Kindergarten students are taught reading in Navajo, and in the early grades, all subjects, except English, are taught in Navajo (Reyhner, 1990).

Arapaho is a North American Indian language spoken in Wyoming and Oklahoma. SIL found 1,500 Arapaho speakers out of a population of 5,000 in 1977, which was very similar to the state of Kwak'wala. Assuming the decline continued at the rate of Kwak'wala's, there would probably be no more than 300 Arapaho speakers today. However, the language has had a small revival (an increase of a few speakers) owing to a nursery immersion project. Parents with children in the Arapaho immersion nursery are being paid a yearly salary to participate in the program and learn Arapaho themselves (Steve Greymorning, personal communication, May 1998). This project highlights the fact that there is no language that is so far gone that nothing can be done with it. It also shows the effectiveness of immersion, which can work even with the difficult polymorphemic North American languages (see also Greymorning, this volume).

The most successful language revival project, Hebrew, did not restrict the philosophy of immersion to schools but spread it quickly to all levels of society. Fishman writes, "The revival was based upon prior adult ideological commitment to spoken Hebrew and it was finally accomplished by creating Hebrew-as-a second-language settlements (=homes, families, neighborhoods) without even waiting for elementary schools to be organized" (1991, p. 245).

One of the most successful immersion efforts has been the development of immersion preschools in New Zealand. According to Bernard Spolsky,

> A meeting of Maori leaders, sponsored by the Department of Maori Affairs in 1981, suggested the establishment of all-Maori-language preschool groups, in which older Maoris, fluent speakers of the language, would conduct the programmes and make up for the fact that the majority of Maori parents could no longer speak their language. . . . The effect of the kohanga reos [language nests] cannot be exaggerated, where six years ago a bare handful of children came to primary school with any knowledge of the Maori language, now each year between 2000 and 3000 children, many of them fluent bilinguals, start school after having already been exposed to daily use of the Maori language for three or more years. (1990, p. 123).

Local Maori communities were in charge of organizing and implementing these language nests, and the New Zealand Government's Department of Maori Affairs provided some encouragement and financial support. The movement grew from four language nests in 1982 to nearly 500 in 1987. These preschools expose children to an all Maori language environment before they have been strongly impacted by English. The preschool program has been extended to completely Maori language elementary schools, and at the secondary level some courses are now taught in Maori. There is even a bilingual post-secondary institution, Makoura College, to instruct bilingual teachers (Spolsky, 1990).

To duplicate this Maori success for the Kwakwaka'wakw, language nests would have to be implemented fairly quickly, before the critical number of Kwak'wala speaking elders who could work in these preschools drops too low. Preschool activities can include free play, reading Kwak'wala stories and telling Kwak'wala stories using flannelboard figures, Kwak'wala singing (traditional and children's songs), walking to the beach, practicing Native art, eating, and playing inside with puzzles, playdough, blocks, and animal figures.

Maori language immersion efforts for adults have been in place since 1979. Week-long Maori immersion retreats take place on *marae*, which are Maori recreational and cultural community centers. Before starting a retreat students are expected to spend 10 to 12 hours on activities to learn some survival phrases in Maori because there is a complete voluntary ban on English during the retreat. Participants cope with the help of dictionaries and pantomime. These retreats can have 30 to 35 students and can be divided into three different fluency levels. The levels join for some activities and separate for others. Activities include everything from lectures, to sweeping the floor, to giving speeches. The immersion courses also emphasize physical activities and music. Students begin the day with exercises, move from class to class, wait on tables, clean the *marae*, and sing vigorous *waiata-a-ringa* or modern action songs. They also play games in Maori. Rangi Nicholson recalled, "At one course, we invented language for

playing softball. It was hilarious!" (1990, p. 115). Imagine playing soccer, a Kwakwaka'wakw passion, in Kwak'wala!

The goal is to reestablish Maori cultural norms of hospitality, caring, spirituality, and sharing—behavioral norms for which the spoken Maori language is considered essential. Maori adult immersion has been successful, resulting in adults speaking much more Maori. The programs have also become recognized in academic circles, and are part of the degree program at *Te Wananga o Raukawa*, a Maori college. One of the signs of progress in language revival is the formation of a Maori language pop band. The Maori language efforts have been a success that has defied all the experts' predictions; however the total number of fluent Maori speakers is still declining (Fishman, 1991).

Week-long Kwak'wala language retreats could be modeled after the Maori efforts. Beginning on Monday afternoon, there would be a time when the course philosophy and organization is explained in English so that people know what is going to happen during the week, and on Monday night a self-imposed ban could be put on speaking English and not lifted till the following Friday night. Saturday morning would be spent cleaning up and having a debriefing session where the students could say how they felt about the course. The course could conclude at noon with a closing ceremony and lunch. Planned activities could take place from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M., with appropriate lunch, supper, and coffee breaks. Every hour or so there would be a change of activity and/or change of classroom. Living in a retreat situation and speaking only Kwak'wala can be exhausting, so adequate time for rest and refreshment must be set aside. The ideal size of a class would be around 12 people. This would allow for sufficient student interaction, but would not be overwhelming. The retreats should have a balance of listening (lecture-type presentations), talking (small group activities and speeches), doing (total physical response activities, such as when the teacher tells you to touch your nose and you do), and writing (literacy).

Kwak'wala learning in an immersion setting should not be restricted to the classroom. Students should also help with the work. There should be various jobs that need to be done—helping in the kitchen, setting and clearing tables, cleaning bathrooms, sweeping, etc. For each job there should be a list of activities written down on a chart in Kwak'wala and hung on the wall. The students should be divided into support groups that rotate from job to job. The groups could be composed of people who are at different levels in their Kwak'wala ability, so that the less competent could learn from the more advanced and the advanced could learn leadership skills.

Each student could be working toward a short speech in Kwak'wala. Giving speeches is an especially appropriate domain of Kwak'wala, and topics could include a description of a potlatch, church service, or other gathering the students have been to recently. More advanced students could tell a short story, or talk about local, national, or international issues. The speeches would involve students in reading and writing as well as memorizing and speaking.

The Maoris realized it is important for the students to feel refreshed spiritually, mentally, and physically during the retreats. To attain this goal, they start

and end each day with prayer and have church services every morning. Nicholson notes the whole tone of the courses has improved with the strengthening of spirituality. Like the Maoris, the Kwakwaka'wakw are spiritual people. It would be wise to have an immersion program that would give the students a chance to work on their spirituality.

Nicholson notes that in the first Maori-immersion retreats: "The courses were long and the hours were long.... Sometimes an elder could be speaking at three in the morning. Many people left feeling mental and physical wrecks" (1990, p. 110). With good organization and a varied program, students need not feel this way. After the students finish the retreat and learn some Kwak'wala, there may be some reluctance to go back to English and a desire to continue learning Kwak'wala. At this point, it is possible to plan another retreat that builds on the first level. Eventually, there could even be three programs, all at different levels, held simultaneously. This would be a more efficient use of the facilities and the elders' time than having three separate retreats. Eventually it may be possible to take these retreats for university credit, which could provide an added incentive for more students to sign up for the courses. However, if Kwak'wala is recognized prematurely in the universities, it can entice the Kwakwaka'wakw into English speaking domains.

Media: Successful language efforts all have made efforts to use their language in the media—television, radio, newspapers, and so forth—and develop a body of literature to increase its prestige. A language effort that ignores the importance of the media encounters difficulties. The Working Group on Irish Language Television Broadcasting reported in 1987, "a language which does not have a substantial television service of its own cannot have a credible contemporary status; the stature of a language depends to a large extent on its presence and use in the media, and especially on television" (quoted in Benton, 1991, p. 1). Language efforts that make use of media and literature include Swahili, Amharic, Catalán, Hebrew, Yiddish, Sango, Tok Pisin, Irish, Basque, Frisian, Navajo, Me'phaa, and Maori.

In Canada there is a tendency to use modern methods and media like television, radio, videos, and computers prematurely in an attempt to revive the language. Possible examples of this tendency can include the National Aboriginal Computer Users Committee which was set up to exchange information in eleven indigenous languages (Chase, 1992); the Kwak'wala CD ROM project; the creation of Kwak'wala fonts on computer; the proposed interactive Kwak'wala computer game; and the Kwak'wala video disk talking dictionary project. Fishman (1991) also notes that most reversing language shift efforts have "great dictionary" projects that tend to become "sacred cows" or monuments in their own right, rather than stimulants leading to improved intergenerational mother tongue transmission. Furthermore, it is difficult to compete with English in these modern arenas. For instance, there will be better, or at least more professional, English television than Kwak'wala television because of the greater resources of larger groups, just as large high schools usually have better athletic teams than small high schools.

The Kwakwaka'wakw can take important steps in the realm of media to get people thinking and living in Kwak'wala. For example, it would be a good idea to put up Kwak'wala signs in as many locations as possible—streets, band offices, health centers, etc. At times the U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay puts out newsletters in Kwak'wala. It would be worthwhile to try to get more Kwak'wala on the radio and local cable television and thus raise its prestige. Traditional songs and dances would be well suited for media such as radio, video, and television.

Modern expertise and technology can be useful if used correctly. Films and videotapes can help reverse language shift if they focus on home, family, child, and youth material (Fishman, 1991). A Kwak'wala computer communication network could be useful for keeping in contact with Kwak'wala speakers in the various villages and cities throughout the British Columbia coast. However, none of these ideas are directly related to reversing language shift at Fishman's stage seven. That is, they do not stop people from communication in English, and as such, might be considered "mere tokenisms." This being the case, it is wise not to spend an inordinate amount of time and resources on them. However, they give Kwak'wala prestige and exposure and thus make for good public relations.

Population: The last characteristic of successful revitalization programs is to establish a large population of speakers. The small Kwakwaka'wakw population is a drawback, but they can take comfort in the advantages of living in small communities—back-to-Kwak'wala advocates have the potential of being big fish in small ponds. A few dedicated people can make a big difference in reversing language shift to English in small communities.

A proposal for reviving Kwak'wala

Given the facts that Kwak'wala is a dying language and there have been successful language revitalization efforts for other indigenous languages at Fishman's stage seven (see the introduction to this volume for an explanation of Fishman's stages), I outline below some suggestions to revitalize the Kwak'wala language and in that way strengthen the people. To move towards Fishman's stage six requires creating Kwak'wala-speaking families and communities. There is a need to develop specific domains, set off by clear boundaries, where everyone in the community agrees to use Kwak'wala, and the community must offer some real rewards for Kwak'wala speakers.

At stage seven, elders are the most important language revitalization resource. However, activities involving the elders are useful for the purposes of reversing language shift only if they lead to intergenerational transmission. It is of critical importance to have activities that strengthen the links between elders and their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, as the Maori preschools do. Activities must be linked to the ongoing, normal, daily family and community functions, particularly to the daily life of the children. At stage seven, questions about the correct usage of Kwak'wala should be deferred, and all resources should be spent on promoting opportunities to communicate in Kwak'wala—without undue attention to the "proper" form. Although "pure

Kwak'wala" may be encouraged, people speaking broken Kwak'wala, Kwak'wala with a lot of English borrowings, or divergent dialects should not be made to feel embarrassed. The emotional cost brought on by infighting over these problems is far too high. First, Kwak'wala must be put back into homes and communities, and then the matter of a standard may be looked at again, but it should be a flexible standard, not one that is rigidly enforced (Fishman, 1991).

Another mistake language efforts, especially those involving literacy, can make is to put too much emphasis on expanding vocabulary and domains of use too soon. There are a lot of domains, such as computers, which are not served by the Kwak'wala language. There is the temptation to fill in new, modern domains immediately by coining new Kwak'wala words. After all, few people want to speak an old-fashioned language. However, Kwak'wala cannot be made suitable for serving new functions out of thin air. If new Kwak'wala words having to do with office work are coined by some individual in isolation from a real office, they are not likely to be used by anyone. However, if a community of Kwak'wala speakers decides they want to use Kwak'wala instead of English in their office, Kwak'wala may gradually start replacing English in this domain and the community of speakers themselves will invent or borrow the words they need to conduct their work.

Fishman maintains that, "pinpointed goals must be focused upon first, goals that are oriented toward much smaller societal units such as families, clubs or neighborhoods, or to speaking (rather than writing), or to schools (rather than businesses), or to kindergartens (rather than high schools), etc." (1991, p. 12). When Hebrew was resurrected, there was an emphasis on the spoken versus written language. When coining new words, the members of the Hebrew Language Academy began with carpentry and kitchen terms, where people could put them into immediate use.

The most common error taken by language revival efforts for languages in stage seven is to go immediately to stages four and five of Fishman's model, which have to do with education, before addressing the needs of the foundational stages that have to do with family, neighborhood, and community. It is attractive to target schools, because they are relatively easy to plan for and control, and it is customary to focus on teaching the language as a means of reviving it. If Kwak'wala classes and bilingual education in general produce unsatisfactory results, the Kwak'wala educational system is blamed instead of the "mainstream [society] that defines it, warps it, starves it, threatens it and then blames it for not curing the problems" (Fishman, 1992, p. 399) or the people who are simply not speaking the language. A case in point is the T'_isalagi'lakw School in Alert Bay, where most of the Kwak'wala instructors are discouraged to the point of quitting. In 1992 the program evaluator noted that a common question asked by parents is, "How come the children have been taking Kwak'wala and by the eighth year they still just blurt out words... can't converse?"

Even if students learn Kwak'wala in school, they will soon forget it if they can't use it in their family or community. At stage seven, a strategy for language learning is important, but even more important is a strategy for language reten-

tion outside of schools. There must be reasons to speak Kwak'wala outside of the school. The educational system will serve the cause of reversing language shift best when Kwak'wala is reinforced before the children start school and after they have completed their schooling In addition, for schools to be successful, it is necessary to train Kwak'wala speakers to become teachers, but this too must be done with a view toward intergenerational transmission. If the goal is not intergenerational transmission, training teachers may help the individuals, but it will not reverse the slide toward English. The teachers may well realize that there is more money to be made in the English-speaking world and join the mainstream. Such was the result of the Kwak'wala Teacher Training Project that ended in May 1986. Eight of the nine students who completed the program went on to work toward a Bachelor of Education at Simon Fraser University. It was noted, "Perhaps the greatest contribution of the KTTP was in giving the students enough confidence to take the Simon Fraser program, even though it meant that qualified people were absent from the community" (*First Nations Language Teacher Training Directory*, 1989). Instead of strengthening the Kwak'wala language, it moved some potential leaders of a "back-to-Kwak'wala" movement further into English-speaking domains.

Leanne Hinton's "Master-Apprentice" model is one way to develop Kwak'wala teachers by first developing their ability to speak the language through working directly with elders. Her model is designed to get young adults (two to three years before the usual age of childbearing) to live with the elders who are native speakers, exchanging assistance to the elderly for Kwak'wala immersion (either all day or for several hours per day) for at least a year or two (Joshua Fishman, personal communication, March 1997). In particular, young women should be targeted, because the mother's role in intergenerational transmission is far more important than the father's. Fishman (1991) points out that during these early years, modern parents require birthing instruction, parenting instruction, child care, and child health provision.

For every Kwak'wala speaker, there are probably four semi-speakers, aged from 30 to 60. These people often feel ashamed of their own lack of mastery of Kwak'wala, and though they may understand the language well, many refuse to speak it. The semi-speakers are one group to focus on to revive the language. Leanne Hinton has suggested organizing a series of potlucks for semi-speakers, where they would speak only Kwak'wala without fear of ridicule (personal communication, April 1997). Manno Taylor, a semi-speaker in Alert Bay, suggested a "Kwak'wala club" serving the same purpose.

A language restoration effort such as proposed in this paper need not be backward-looking. Indeed, Kwak'wala must be updated to face the twenty-first century. This process of modernizing the language can go hand in hand with Kwak'walizing modern services. Revival can work best with a combination of old and new ideas, taking the best from English and Kwakwaka'wakw society. A common slogan of the Australian outstation settlements is "two ways" or "both ways," which implies that it is not total isolation from the modern world that is desired, but, rather, an ability to retain that which is selected from the traditional

alongside that which is adopted from the outside and to do both under community control (Fishman, 1991).

Initial implementation and reaction

My family and I moved to Alert Bay in January 1995, and we immediately became involved quite extensively with the Kwakwaka'wakw. I began pastoring the Pentecostal church and substitute teaching at the T'_isalagi'lakw School, my wife began working as a nurse, and my children began attending a local school and daycare. In the summer of 1995, I took a second language acquisition course at the University of North Dakota, and proceeded to use the method taught there to learn Kwak'wala myself. In an effort to implement Kwak'wala in the community, I spoke to several key people in Alert Bay about my ideas—the chief, the principal, and other leaders. I also expressed my thoughts to the Kwak'wala Steering Committee, a group with representation from all Kwakwaka'wakw communities. In a show of solidarity, they have given the Steering Committee responsibility for overseeing the task of reviving Kwak'wala. My talk to the Steering Committee generated some interest and questions.

I began the implementation process by making drafts of my master's thesis available to anyone who wanted one. At people's request, I also made a three page summary of my thesis and dropped off copies for the U'mista newsletter, the Musgamagw newspaper, and the T'_isalagi'lakw School newsletter. They were printed in the Musgamagw and the U'mista newsletters, and the Musgamagw and T'_isalagi'lakw newsletters have carried additional, shorter articles explaining my ideas. When I finished my thesis, I left copies of it in the Namgis Health Centre waiting room, and about a dozen were taken home by Kwakwaka'wakw.

The best method for spreading the ideas was oral. Many villagers were enthusiastic and agreed wholeheartedly with what I said. They frequently expressed the concept that without the language the culture is dead, and they listened attentively as I point out the steps necessary to revive Kwak'wala. Many community members express a desire to learn Kwak'wala. Some say they used to be fluent as children but have lost it. These enjoy listening to Kwak'wala. Others were not fluent as children but gained fluency as adults—by spending time with elders.

Because I speak rudimentary Kwak'wala, I am a curiosity to the villagers. They seem to enjoy speaking Kwak'wala to me—especially in front of their younger family members who do not understand. On the whole, old and young alike express positive feelings for my learning Kwak'wala, and people seem eager to teach me. There are many family units in Alert Bay where only the older members speak Kwak'wala. I came into these homes and facilitated sessions in which the Kwak'wala speakers taught the rest of their family. Most people in the school and in the community have been very positive about my ideas, including my philosophy and my teaching methods. One concept that is a little touchy is that of solidarity—particularly the issue of relationships and marriages outside of the tribe. My statement that mixed marriages do not bode well

for Kwak'wala was greeted with approval by people who had married other Kwakwaka'wakw. People who had relationships with non-Kwakwaka'wakw, however, were either silent, or told me to "butt out."

With my encouragement, a woman spearheaded Kwak'wala services beginning in the fall of 1996 at the Pentecostal church in Alert Bay. They were initially fairly successful, with around a dozen people attending. Enthusiasm waned, and now the services continue in a modified format. More sporadically now, from three to 16 of us meet in one of the two Kwak'wala speakers' homes. This case underscores the difficulties of promoting language for its own sake. It did not seem worthwhile to this Kwak'wala speaker to teach the language itself, but she was willing to teach the Word of God in Kwak'wala.

The young adults' reaction was revealing. A young carver said he had heard some youths talking among themselves, saying that if I could learn Kwak'wala, so could they. He was excited that they were challenged by me, an outsider to the community, speaking Kwak'wala. He felt this would motivate them to learn. Interestingly, he didn't express a desire to learn it himself. Another man said, "We want our kids to learn Kwak'wala, and if the way to do that is to learn it ourselves, then I guess that's what we'll have to do." The teenagers of Alert Bay reacted in various ways. The common thread was that there was not the motivation required to learn Kwak'wala. However, they did express a sense of solidarity and desire to learn Kwak'wala. One said, "We've been trying to learn Kwak'wala for years and here you show up and learn it in one year—it pisses us off!" Another youth, who was angry at me for kicking her out of class, told the principal I had no business speaking Kwak'wala, since I was not Indian. A third teen said, "I used to really not like you...used to think, 'Who does he think he is, speaking Kwak'wala?'"

Most community members expressed a desire to revive Kwak'wala but were not willing to do much about the matter personally, preferring instead to make it the responsibility of the schools. The low motivation at the family and community level is an alarming sign, because it is on this level that all successful language projects are based. Community interest did result in my being hired by the T'_isalagi'lakw School in Alert Bay. In February 1997, I signed a three-month contract to develop curriculum and to promote Kwak'wala, particularly among the children. I feel I was given the job because of the proposal described in my master's thesis and, more importantly, because I am the first person in decades to learn Kwak'wala. I began teaching almost immediately, using a fluent Kwak'wala speaking teacher and a second language acquisition model taught by Anita Bickford at the University of North Dakota. This method is a hearing-driven language acquisition method based on ideas set forth in various manuscripts by Greg Thomson (1992, 1996) and in books by Stephen Krashen, including his *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (1982). The method emphasizes having sessions with fluent Kwak'wala speakers and guiding the speakers through the use of objects and pictures to slowly increase the students' knowledge of Kwak'wala. It also requires the students to tape-

record all the new vocabulary and sentences learned in each session, listen to the tapes frequently, and write up the contents of the tapes in journal form.

My first students were the children from grades one to seven who are taught Kwak'wala for half an hour per day. Soon after, I also started teaching Kwak'wala twice a week to adults, mostly school staff. In an effort to create a sense of personal responsibility, I printed a line from a Maori hymn on the syllabus of the class, "Send a revival, start the work in me." After two months, I began co-teaching with a young Kwakwaka'wakw who had become familiar with the teaching method. My goal was to first familiarize as many Kwakwaka'wakw as possible with Kwak'wala and then to promote Kwak'wala literacy. At the end of the adult class, all new vocabulary and phrases were taped three times in Kwak'wala and once in English. During my tenure at the school, this tape was played over the public address system twice a day (a total of about 15 minutes).

In Alert Bay my teaching method worked well and was initially received enthusiastically by the students. After about two months, however, only about one quarter of the children remained interested in learning Kwak'wala. The rest disturbed the class to the point where little learning could continue. Kwak'wala classes for the adults proceeded along the same lines. For the first month there was a lot of excitement, with at least twenty adults showing up. All were very keen on learning Kwak'wala and expressed a desire to use it more and more in the school. The principal even announced that in the future salary raises would be tied to how well people had mastered Kwak'wala. However, the adults were very reluctant to speak or write Kwak'wala. By the second month, people were expressing frustration and embarrassment because they felt ridiculed by the Kwak'wala helpers. Within three months, interest faded, and the class dwindled to four people.

Some of the Kwakwaka'wakw most interested in Kwak'wala revival (three 19/20-year-olds and one older Kwak'wala speaker) came with me to the University of North Dakota in the summer of 1997 with the idea they would learn Anita Bickford's method of language acquisition, practice it on the Kwak'wala speaker on campus, and then continue using the method to acquire more Kwak'wala and become increasingly literate when they returned home. Two of the three young people turned down a trip to Holland to take the course. The bands provided enough funds for transportation, room and board, and a few hundred dollars spending money to support the Kwak'wala acquisition project at the University of North Dakota.

The opposition encountered in implementing the ideas of in my master's thesis clearly show how deep-rooted is the sentiment that the salvation of Kwak'wala is in the hands of the schools. Any initiative I planned that was not entirely academic was considered suspect by many and fought by some. Even though I frequently stated that the emphasis should be on families and community, most of my efforts at language revitalization were channeled away from the community and into the school.

Knight Inlet retreat

One Kwak'wala event that was successful was a six-day trip by 16 of us to the remote head of Knight Inlet, about a nine-hour boat ride from Alert Bay. Although the proposal for 100% Kwak'wala immersion did not go according to plan, we did study Kwak'wala intensively for four days, and there was a lot of progress in learning to understand and write the language. While at Knight Inlet, we lived in a eulachon fish camp with about 100 other Kwakwaka'wakw and were able to observe traditional fishing, hear Kwak'wala legends (in English), play traditional games, and learn how the Kwakwaka'wakw used certain plants.

The idea of having a language immersion camp at Knight Inlet generated a lot of excitement and suggestions. We were asked to put notices in the U'mista newsletter and on cable television, informing the community about the upcoming trip. Other suggestions included holding a bingo to raise money and going door to door asking for donations. There were many people who gave us advice on how to prepare for the trip, and they lent us cabins and donated food. Most of the positive comments about the trip had less to do with learning Kwak'wala and more to do with being Indian and doing something traditional—in other words, solidarity. This experience shows again how language is seldom learned for its own sake.

The Cultural Committee stirred up a lot of opposition to the Knight Inlet trip. They, as well as other community members, thought it was not a good idea. I was made to jump through many hoops and get permission from many people, and I was given many discouraging messages. The message on cable television was a sticking point, because we had not asked all the right chiefs for permission. But the trip went ahead successfully, and many community members are saying we should repeat it. One reason the Knight Inlet experience was so successful was that it was an integration of education and family/community. The cost was shared equally between the T'_isalagi'lakw School and the community members who attended, and there were scheduled classes that everyone attended.

The Kwakwaka'wakw seem to be reluctant to commit to a long-term language project. Thus, another reason the Knight Inlet experience was perceived as successful was because it was a short term initiative—it lasted less than a week. Perhaps a camp like this one represents the best hope for Kwak'wala revival. Since this initiative received so much community support, maybe more camps, and more frequent camps, could be organized. Perhaps trips like these could become regular events, being scheduled more and more frequently and lasting longer and longer. Frequently scheduled Kwak'wala camps have the potential to give birth to Kwak'wala-speaking communities—the goal of every successful language project.

The future

Kwak'wala legends are full of references to surprise treasures, called "d_ugwala." Bourdieu (1982, pp. 24-25) compares language to a treasure and people to store houses, each holding different amounts of the treasure. For several decades, the Kwakwaka'wakw have been in the process of losing the trea-

sure of the Kwak'wala language. This paper has proposed a way to refill the storehouses with treasure, to refill the people with Kwak'wala. If matters continue as they are now, the future of Kwak'wala is very dubious. To predict how long Kwak'wala will last, one need only calculate the remaining life'span of the youngest Kwak'wala speakers—a few decades, at the most. Kwak'wala will not go the way of Hebrew, which died as a spoken language but remained in use as a literary language.

Unless the Kwakwaka'wakw are willing to radically change the way they approach Kwak'wala, unless they are willing to spend the time and effort required to learn and promote Kwak'wala, it will die completely in a few decades. At the moment, there does not seem to be enough motivation at the community level to do what needs to be done to revive the language. However, there is still a window of opportunity in which to revive the language. There are still older speakers who are actively integrated into the community. There are a few young people of childbearing age who are learning to speak Kwak'wala. If these young people meet with Kwak'wala speakers regularly and expend the necessary time and effort, they will learn Kwak'wala. If they then go on to raise their children only in Kwak'wala, the life of Kwak'wala will be extended another generation.

Note: This paper is based on the author's 1997 University of North Dakota Master's Thesis *Reversing Language Shift: Can Kwak'wala Be Revived.* The entire thesis can be accessed at http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/linguistics/theses/theses.htm

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